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Putting CIA Through the Wringer

In the expanding world of three-letter organizations, the CIA is now as famous as the NRA spawned by the New Deal during the Great Depression.

The NRA, and its Blue Eagle, was knocked in the head by the Federal courts—remember the “sick chicken” case? But CIA got its lumps from the disastrous attempt to invade Cuba and liberate its people from Castro. Now the Kennedy Administration is well along on plans that will radically change the functions of CIA.

The letters,—and this confuses some people,—stand for “Central Intelligence Authority.” In this case, intelligence means the gathering of information on what other governments are doing and planning, particularly those in the unfriendly or enemy category.

Hitherto the CIA has assembled information, or “intelligence”—some of it gained by real cloak-and-dagger methods—evaluated the information for transmission to the National Security Council and the White House, and acted as agent in sub rosa activities aimed at our foes.

There have been instances in which it has performed brilliantly. The CIA did not perform well in the Cuban invasion, but it might have been far different had there not been a new President in the White House.

At any rate, there will be changes made, perhaps before Mr. Allen Dulles, its current director, resigns in the fall. The spying will go on, and so will the fitting together of thousands of bits of seemingly unimportant knowledge gained simply by reading, looking, and listening. But the output of CIA, in a short time, will be reviewed and evaluated by a new “Director of National Intelligence” whose office will be intimately linked to the National Security Council and the President. Furthermore, the CIA will be taken out of the invasion business, with this phase of counter-action given the armed services’ special forces, where the function belongs.

The result will be that CIA’s size and power will be reduced, but we shall all be safer thereby.